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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000279

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PK](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: PAKISTANI PRESIDENT MUSHARRAF'S NEW
INITIATIVE

REF: ISLAMABAD 609

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice Weiner for reasons 1.4(b) and
(d)

11. (C) Pakistani President Musharraf visited Ankara February 6, meeting wit President Sezer and Prime Minister Erdogan over the course of his one-day stay. According to MFA Deputy Director General for the Middle East Omer Onhon, Musharraf's meetings focused solely on what Onhon described as "Pakistan's Middle East initiative." Onhon said it appears that Musharraf's vision of bringing together moderate Islamic countries in a common initiative stems from his growing fears of rising instability throughout the region. Describing the Israeli-Palestinian issue as the focal point of much of this instability, Musharraf hopes to galvanize support for his as-yet unclear initiative from moderate voices within the Islamic world. As Onhon described the discussions, such a commitment would include pushing for a final determination of Palestinian statehood, eventual recognition of the State of Israel by all involved, and encouraging Israeli-Syrian negotiations on the Golan Heights. Onhon said destabilizing roles in the region - Syria and, especially, Iran - are not part of this initiative. It appears that Musharraf's effort is, according to Onhon, designed at least in part to stabilize the region in hopes of avoiding a broader Shia-Sunni schism. Because Iran in particular is not included, Onhon said Turkey believes this process needs to progress carefully so as not to give the appearance that Shias are being excluded. Onhon also emphasized Turkey does not envisage this effort as in any way creating an alternative to the Quartet process. As long as that remains the case and the initiative can help support the Quartet process, Turkey will stay engaged. The GOT agreed to participate to ensure that the process remains a positive one to which Turkey can contribute. Onhon also noted the GOT had shared these details with the Israeli embassy in Ankara.

13. (C) Pakistan's Ambassador to Turkey, Lt. General (retd.) Syed Iftikhar Hussain Shah, described to us his view of the initiative, which points to the Palestinian problem as the underlying cause of regional instability. Shah also referred to several additional issues of concern to Pakistan, including Iran's nuclear program, Syrian support of Hamas and Hizballah, and the growing Sunni-Shia divide, which Musharraf hopes a core moderate group of Islamic countries can reach consensus on how to address. Shah said Pakistan is reaching out to Indonesia, Malaysia, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Turkey in this initiative, all countries the international community sees as strong and credible and are not directly involved in the Middle East conflict. Shah also noted Musharraf seems pressed to get this project off the ground, verifying the plan for Islamabad to host a ministerial within the next two weeks.

¶4. (C) While Pakistan does have "indirect contact" with Israel, Shah said this effort is not linked to the September 2005 meeting between Pakistani and Israeli foreign ministers facilitated by Turkey to foster communication between the two countries. He added there have been no formal contacts between Pakistan and Israel since that meeting in Turkey and said Pakistan would not be able to recognize the State of Israel until the creation of a Palestinian state.

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<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON